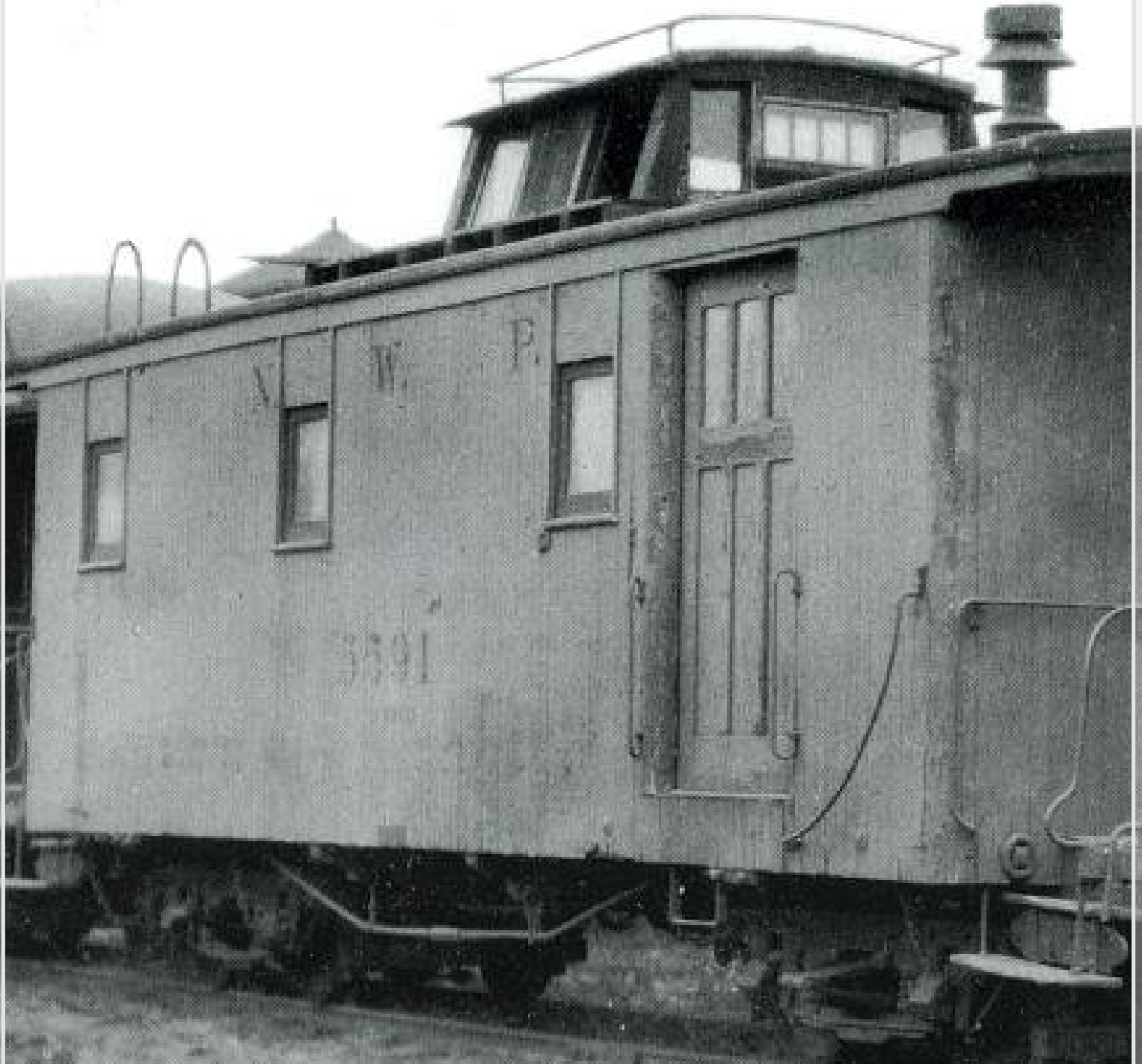


Northwestern Pacific #5591

CABOOSE

Preliminary Report



North Pacific Coast Railroad

Caboose No. 5591

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By

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North Pacific Coast Railroad and Caboose No. 5591

The North Pacific Coast Railroad Company was incorporated to build a three-foot gauge rail line from Sausalito to Duncans Mills, California, a distance of 73.25 miles. Freight traffic would provide a regular business for the company; lumber from the redwood forests, poultry, livestock and produce from the coastal hills were to be loaded aboard freight trains for destinations in San Francisco and points beyond.

Construction started in 1873 from the new ferry terminal site in Sausalito; the rails passing over White's Hill to the west of Fairfax, along the shores of Tomales Bay from Point Reyes Station, and by the end of 1874 along the edge of Keyes Estuary to the town of Tomales for a total distance of 53 miles. Two years later, construction crews had track carrying trains to the town of Duncans Mills. Although business proved lucrative with the carriage of campers and excursionists, redwood, poultry and livestock, the North Pacific Coast found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. The railroad line had been built at great cost with little regard for repaying the enormous loans used to finance the locomotives, rolling stock and construction. The owners of the line borrowed profits of the company to use for personal pleasures and officials blamed each other for every problem. Careless accidents produced lawsuits which became financially detrimental to the railroad. The end result was a complete shambles and the public did not trust the railroad and vice versa. By the late 1890's, the railroad was entangled in debt and faced with having to relay most of the worn out iron rails with

steel. Bridges and roadbed previously weakened by floods and slides required expensive repair. The Depression of 1894 brought the railroad's stockholders to their knees, and it appeared that the NPC would not recover.

On the horizon appeared James B. Stetson, a prominent financier from Massachusetts. He and a number of colleagues purchased the controlling interest in the railway. Under simple and benevolent direction from Stetson, the narrow gauge began to temporarily earn money again. Passenger revenues climbed throughout the '90's, but freight traffic gradually dropped off. The lumber companies had cut production, and dairy and farm business slowed. Net ton-miles hauled over the narrow gauge in 1910 amounted to 2,900,000, down from the 4,400,000 carried in 1892. In January 1902, the North Pacific Coast stockholders again gave up.

A dedicated group of investors, among them R. R. Colgate of detergent fame, and John Martin, Chief of Bay Counties Power Company, took control of the Marin County railroad and ferry line, reorganizing it that month as the North Shore Railroad Company. Martin dreamed of pioneering a high-speed electric commuter railway, and selected the Sausalito to San Rafael segment of the North Shore as his proving ground. The old line between these points was immediately double-tracked and dual gauged to allow the three-foot gauge trains to continue using Sausalito as a terminus. A 550 volt d.c. fourth rail was laid to supply current to new standard gauge interurbans soon to enter scheduled service. Commuter traffic was high; each morning businessmen from the communities of Mill Valley, Larkspur and San Rafael streamed onto the electric cars to be whisked to the Sausalito pier. Once there, they stepped

aboard one of the fleet North Shore ferryboats for the remainder of the trip to San Francisco. Every evening this scene was repeated in reverse.

As the economy of the area soared, so did residential construction in the Bay cities. Building required more lumber, and the redwood companies on the Russian River were only too happy to increase their logging operations and provide the needed materials. The line to Duncan's Mills was gone over in a frenzied relaying of heavier rail. New ties and sturdier bridges were installed to support anticipated longer and heavier trains. As the North Shore's traffic boomed, more cars and locomotives were necessary to haul the burgeoning timber loadings. Among the orders for new freight equipment in 1904 was Caboose No. 2002 (5591). The carshops in Sausalito were ordered to construct a 34-foot long caboose, 12 feet high at the top of cupola, with a light weight of 26,500 pounds.

By the turn of the century, the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe Railroads were battling for access to the wealth of the Redwood Empire. AT&SF had begun building southward from Eureka, and was carefully sizing up the North Shore as a valuable addition to its system. Meanwhile, the Southern Pacific had received an option on the highly profitable California Northwestern, formerly the San Francisco & North Pacific, run by A. W. Foster. The CNW ran trains from Tiburon, through Ukiah to Willits, California. The North Shore began feeling the all-too-familiar grip of financial difficulty. Too much money had been spent on luxurious ferryboats, a new depot in Sausalito, locomotives and right of way improvements. When the State of California levied a 10% tax on a reassessment of stock, the North Shore realized that bankruptcy was near and began soliciting support to escape monetary disaster.

Santa Fe backed off on learning that Southern Pacific interests were controlling the CNW and quietly bid farewell to the narrow gauge. In mid-1904, Arthur Foster purchased the North Shore system and operated it independently from the California Northwestern Railway for two years, although directors were shared. As SP and Santa Fe neared battle, nature intervened.

On the morning of April 18, 1906 at 5:13 a.m., the birds hushed their morning song abruptly. As dogs howled and horses bolted, the earth heaved violently. The narrow gauge was nearly ruined. A three-foot gauge southbound passenger train awaiting departure from Point Reyes Station was turned over intact; trestles were twisted into useless kindling, and sections of earth fill across Tomales Bay inlet split and sank into the mud. All along the route, the North Shore was either isolated intact or torn and wrecked beyond use. Similar damage was inflicted on the California Northwestern and the Santa Fe's San Francisco & Northwestern Railroad.

In January 1907, Arthur Foster resigned as President of the North Shore and the CNW. At the same time, the SP's E. H. Harriman and the Santa Fe's E. P. Ripley came to terms. They both realized that it would be self-destructive to run parallel rail lines through the Coast Range.

Thereupon, both men cooperated in the formation of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company. The NWP took over all railway companies previously controlled by the two Transcontinentals, including the old North Shore operations. As rolling stock had to be pooled into a workable united system, every engine and each piece of rolling stock underwent renumbering. Caboose No. 2002 was relettered as NWP No. 6101.

When the Bay cities were destroyed by the great earthquake and fire in the previous year, many people were forced to relocate or rebuild their homes and businesses. The lumber demand soared, and the narrow gauge felt a surge of life once again. The Northwestern Pacific began to increase their freight car roster by building new freight cars and buying many used ones from the South Pacific Coast which was in the process of standard gauging their lines between Oakland and Santa Cruz. The heavy traffic was short lived; a flood destroyed a standard gauge bridge on the NWP's Guerneville Branch at a point near Bohemia, California. When the bridge was rebuilt upstream a small distance at Monte Rio, the railroad chose to dual gauge the former North Shore tracks from the new bridge to Duncans Mills. The standard gauge was able to carry most of the rough-sawn lumber from the coast to Healdsburg and points east without the necessity of transferring between narrow and broad gauge cars.

About 1907, Caboose No. 6101 was repainted in the NWP's standard caboose colors of medium yellow and black; also at this time, the rooftop marker lamp was replaced with four standard flush-mounted marker lamp brackets, one on each corner post of the car. This arrangement was a common railroad practice throughout the United States.

In August 1913, the car had automatic couplers and new draft gear installed at the cost of \$11.62. One year later it became NWP No. 5591.

As of 1914, the Northwestern Pacific had adopted a policy of fitting all caboose cupolas with fore and aft train number indicators to aid railroad crews in identifying passing trains. In the center end windows of Caboose No. 5590 and No. 5591, a tilt-out panel with slots for four 5" x 8" number

slides and an equal number of opaque white glass slides. Before each run, the conductor would place the scheduled train number in the indicators by sandwiching the appropriate number and white glass slides together and inserting them one per slot. This panel was then replaced in the center window so that it could be seen from the ground as the caboose passed by in a train. The train indicators are very similar in design to those used on the NWP's locomotives, except that those used on engines had a kerosene lamp case built into the number box for illuminating at night.

In 1912, the Interstate Commerce Commission established stringent safety laws for use by all common carrier railroads. The NWP complied by installing handholds on the car sides at all corners, end sills and on the cupola roof; footboards surrounded the cupola base to provide a safe and level walkway.

Considerable timber traffic was generated following the outbreak of World War I, but as the war ended, automobiles began to make inroads on the passenger and freight traffic of the narrow gauge. Train service was reduced to a tri-weekly basis to compensate for the slump in business. In April 1920, the former North Shore line from Manor to Point Reyes was standard gauged, leaving only the section between Point Reyes Station and Monte Rio intact. In the fall of 1923, a disastrous fire raced through the prime timber lands between Guerneville and Jenner-by-the-Sea. This fire effectively killed the lumber business for many years throughout this area.

By 1926, narrow gauge trains were operating only as far north as Camp Meeker since the freight and passenger business beyond this point was almost

nonexistent. In 1929, the Santa Fe found the error in their ways and, with great relief, sold all their outstanding shares in the Northwestern Pacific to the SP. The AT&SF had always required a ferry transfer of rolling stock between Point Richmond and Tiburon which made train operations for them extremely impractical and definitely profitless. This sale did nothing to help the narrow gauge.

It was no surprise when the last operations between Point Reyes Station and Camp Meeker took place in March of 1930. When the rails were torn up that next autumn, the rolling stock and locomotives formerly scattered over the line were disposed of from Point Reyes Station. Caboose No. 5590 and No. 5591 were stripped of brake gear, trucks and end platforms, and sold to individuals for residential use; No. 5591 was later converted into a storage building. When donated to the State of California in 1959, the car was trucked to nearby Samuel P. Taylor State Park. Here, it was setup on ties atop the old North Pacific Coast right of way as a rest stop for hikers and as a monument to the line for which it had worked so many years.

In 1968, the caboose was secured as a candidate for inclusion in the Railroad Museum being planned for Old Sacramento. The Department of Parks and Recreation entrusted the No. 5591 into the care of the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society for restoration. It was trucked from Samuel P. Taylor State Park to San Francisco and the Bethlehem Shipyard, the firm which had handled the refurbishing of several items in the Pacific Coast Chapter's collection. Bethlehem stripped the car of all exterior siding, hardware and the cupola. New end platforms were fabricated and butted onto the still-sturdy frame. The badly rotted cupola was

dismantled and rebuilt with new materials. The exterior siding was replaced with plywood which had been grooved to simulate tongue-and-groove panelling. All ironwork on the end platforms was newly manufactured. Trucks, air cylinder, brakes and draft gear were obtained from the defunct West Side Lumber Company railroad in Tuolumne, California. End door hardware taken from the car early in the restoration was replaced with a different latching assembly. In September 1969, the car was released from the shipyard and trucked to the Society's Oakland warehouse at the Key System Inspection Barn. Resplendent in a rich yellow paint, lettered NWP No. 5591 and carrying the Northwestern Pacific's colorful monogram depicting Mount Tamalpais, Richardson's Bay and a colossal redwood tree within a circle surrounded by the company name and slogan, "REDWOOD EMPIRE ROUTE", the caboose may highlight the rear of the 1920's vintage freight train in the California State Railroad Museum's Railroad History Building.

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CHRONOLOGY OF
NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD

CABOOSE No. 5591

1904 Built by North Shore Railroad Car Shops at Sausalito, CA;

No. 2002.

1907 Caboose No. 2002 becomes part of Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company and renumbered NWP No. 6101. Repainted to NWP colors of medium yellow and black. Rooftop marker lamp replaced with standard marker lamp brackets at each corner.

1912 ICC required installation of handholds on car sides at all corners, end beams and cupola roof, and footboards surrounding cupola base.

1913 (Aug.) Automatic couplers and new draft gear installed at cost of \$11.62.

1914 Caboose No. 6101 renumbered to No. 5591 and train number slots added fore and aft on caboose cupola's center window.

1930 (Mar.) Last run of NWP narrow gauge. No. 5591 hauled back to Point Reyes for storage.

- 1934 (Oct.) Sold to United Commercial Co. Brake gear, trucks and end platforms removed, and car converted to residence near Point Reyes Station. (Later became storage building.)
- 1959 Donated to State of California and trucked to Samuel P. Taylor State Park.
- 1968 Entrusted to the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society for restoration and possible future inclusion in the California State Railroad Museum. Restoration performed by Bethlehem Shipyard.
- 1969 (Sept.) Trucked to Key System Barn for storage.

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Photographs from Roy D. Graves Collection, Bancroft Library,
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Northeastern Pacific Common Standard Blueprints for train indicators.

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